

Elder Caregiving

By Judith S. Parnes, L.C.S.W., C.M.C.

A large and fast growing segment of employees are faced with a caregiving responsibility that can be more challenging than finding child care. Geriatric care giving affects millions of baby boomers that are over 50 years of age. The average working couple in the United States today has more living parents than children and in our mobile society is therefore more likely to be living far from the aging parent who now needs their help.

According to a survey of 1,000 adults by the National Council on Aging (NCOA):

- More than ½ of Americans have friends or relatives that need long-term care
- Nearly 30% have provided personal assistance
- 67% reported that it had a significant impact on their family lives
- 41% reported that it had a significant impact on work
- Women were more likely to have provided hands on assistance – 58% vs. 48% for men
- 48% of women reported a significant impact on work vs. 32% for men
- 73% of women reported a significant impact on their family life vs. 60% of men
- 40% of women reported a significant impact on their own health vs. 18% of men
- 56% of women described long-term care as a “very big problem” vs. 42% of men

These numbers tell us that although this is a very serious problem for all of us, the impact on women is greater than on men.

Geriatric Care Managers can assist in solving dilemmas of not knowing what to do next. The care manager provides assessments that give an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the older person and the family environment. This professional can review options and will develop a plan of action including recommendations to help both the elderly person and the family members make difficult decisions. If a home care plan is needed, the care manager is familiar with resources available and can provide ongoing monitoring to ensure the quality of those resources. If alternative living arrangements are being considered, the professional care manager can help to evaluate the appropriate facility and can provide advice regarding government programs and other means of financing.

Professional care managers typically work on a fee basis, much like accountants or attorneys. Fees generally range in the area of \$125 to \$200 per hour. While this may appear costly, the care manager can often save a family far more than their fees. Employing a professional care manager can certainly reduce the amount of stress and time lost from work by the caregiver. For families living at a distance from their loved one, a professional care manager can reduce or eliminate the caregiver’s cost of traveling back and forth out of state; sometimes called “Suitcase Care.” In addition, care plans produced by professionals tend to be far more cost effective than those produced by a family member unfamiliar with the complex and costly long term care system.

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Please visit www.elderlifemanagement.org or call (732) 493-8080 for more information.